



COMMANDER'S CORNER

Mission First • People Always • One Team

CG bids farewell, looks back at busy tour

As I relinquish command of 1st Corps and Fort Lewis, Vivian and I just want to express our heartfelt appreciation for the tremendous support Team Lewis has given us in the past two plus years.

Our tour here has been deeply satisfying and rewarding, much of that due to the wonderful and sincere kindness that every Soldier, family, civilian, and retiree, both internal to Fort Lewis, and outside from our civilian communities, has extended to us. We cannot thank you enough for all that you have done to make 1st Corps and Fort Lewis the best place in the Army. Lt. Gen. Jim Dubik and his wife, Ms. Sharon Basso assume command on Nov. 3, and I know that all of Team Lewis will provide the same selfless support to them that you have given to me and Vivian. As we say farewell, I would just express a few thoughts about the last two plus years.

A little more than two years ago, I came to Fort Lewis to take command at an installation that I served at very early in my career as a 1st lieutenant in 1971. Vivian and I were very much looking forward to coming back to the place we remembered as the jewel of Army installations and a place where Soldiers and families enjoyed a working and living environment unlike any other in the world. When we came here two years ago, we had nothing but grand expectations just as we did back in 1971 and I am happy to say that once again, Fort Lewis delivered. It has continued to grow and become even better because of the wonderful people that comprise Team Lewis. It is no wonder to either of us that this is the most sought after assignment in the Army.

I took command of 1st Corps and Fort Lewis in August 2002 and promoted a command philosophy of Mission First, People Always, One Team. Since that time, those six words have provided a framework for all of us who live, work, and play here. It is a very simple, but powerful notion and by implementing it to its fullest, everyone on post has served the good of our Soldiers and families, the community in general, and the greater good of the Army. It is has been a philosophy that has guided virtually every decision that



Mike Cullum

Lt. Gen. Edward Soriano and his wife Vivian have been part of Team Lewis for more than two years.

we have made in the past two years.

Our mission is to provide trained and ready forces for combatant commanders around the world, and to deploy in support of U.S. Pacific Command in particular. As a means to that, we operate the west coast's only power projection platform and sustain an installation and infrastructure to support those critical functions. Our proximity to McChord Air Force Base along with world class port and rail facilities ensure that we have the capabilities to move personnel and equipment and we will remain relevant and vital to the needs of our Army. I have to say that in the two-plus years Vivian and I have been here, we have watched in complete admiration as the good people here have always placed the mission first. Mission is our number one priority and I would tell you that we have done that better than anyplace I have ever been in 35 years of service.

Our Soldiers and families have risen to the occasion in the face of that often heavy responsibility of providing trained and ready forces. It was Fort Lewis Soldiers who were among the first on the ground in Afghanistan in the weeks and months following the events of September 11th. They were some of the

first across the border into Iraq and they are giving the free people of that war-torn country their first shot at a life of their own. Every major subordinate command on this installation has or is about to deploy, and in some cases, deploy again, to support the global war on terrorism. We have supported in a very significant way the war effort, and everyone should be extremely proud of our troopers. I know we are. And, today, our Soldiers continue to take the fight to the enemy and are doing the difficult things and making the contributions that really make a difference in the world.

Army transformation was born at Fort Lewis and we led the way in this dramatic effort. We stood up the first two Stryker brigades for our Army and are now preparing to receive one more. We have become the Stryker Center for Excellence and the future of the Army has landed smartly in our lane. We proved to the Army that the Stryker brigade combat team is the unit of choice in Iraq and they have performed magnificently in combat operations. We should be proud of the fact that we played the major part in that transformation.

But those high visibility assignments

are only one of our focal points. The 1st Corps patch and the patches of our subordinate commands are seen all over the world and everywhere they serve our Soldiers have a reputation for professionalism and responsibility, and they maintain the well-earned respect of those they serve with. We have proven time and time again that 1st Corps is a warfighting corps, and that capability has been significantly enhanced in the past two years as we have demonstrated in every major exercise in the Pacific our ability to fight as a joint task force or joint force land component command, and soon to be the Army's first corps-level unit of execution. I am extremely proud of the fact that Task Force Olympia is our very own, commanding and controlling combat operations in northern Iraq. TFO is a visible example of this corps' war-fighting capability.

"People always" might seem trite to some, but it is vitally important here at Fort Lewis. Along side every one of those Soldiers who has deployed and gone into harm's way stands a support structure of family, friends, and civilians who emulate that desire to serve. Our Fort Lewis families have really shouldered some of the most significant burdens on military families in recent years and their strength is what keeps many of our Soldiers going. It only stands to reason that we do the things on this installation to take care of our people and protect that resource. We allocate major resources to take care of our people here, and we should all be very proud of that fact. One only has to look around to see the many positive changes ongoing here at Fort Lewis today and what the future holds. We are simply getting better every day.

Fort Lewis initiated one of the Army's pilot programs for privatized housing and today our families enjoy some of the finest accommodations in the military. We accelerated the Residential Communities Initiative and Fort Lewis is home to some of the most attractive and desirable neighborhoods for significant numbers of families. And housing is not the only thing we are doing for our people. There is more than half a billion dollars in construction

planned for this installation, much of it ongoing, and you don't have to look very far to understand that we have the facilities our people deserve. New barracks, maintenance shops, a new Army lodge, the North Fort mini mall and a chapel. We just dedicated a brand new, \$32 million Strategic Deployment Center, one of our more mission-focused projects. It is easy to see that Fort Lewis will remain relevant for a very long time and that our people will always be cared for.

Of course, nothing we have done here at Fort Lewis was done by any single person or organization. Team Lewis has been superb. When I arrived, we took the word "tenant" out of our vocabulary. That word has negative connotations. We are a very diversified installation, with many different kinds of organizations, with many different higher headquarters to report to. But we knew that in order to be successful as an installation, we had to pull together and make it a team effort. You all did that, and you did it magnificently. The term Team Lewis really means something here. It has meant everyone working together for a common objective...to meet the mission, and take care of our people. Thanks to all the commanders, staff, and organizations for pulling together and I will tell you that the contributions from our civilian workforce and the caliber of people they represent is the best the Army has to offer. I couldn't be more proud of our Team.

As Vivian and I prepare to move on from this post, perhaps one of the fondest, and certainly more memorable things we will treasure, will always be the people here. Fort Lewis represents a terrific mix of Soldiers, families, civilians, contractors, and retirees. It takes the concerted efforts of all of these folks to keep up with the high operational tempo of today's Army and individual contributions along with the pride we all take in what we are, and what we stand for, has been just remarkable. We have seen this Team sweat together, laugh together, pray together, and cry together.

Through Army transformation, unprecedented growth, extraordinary community service, and sustaining the world's greatest military, Team Lewis has been on the cutting edge of it all. The people here and their uncanny ability to pull together as one in all they do will forever remain in our hearts.

To Team Lewis, Vivian and I express our deepest thanks and our sincerest appreciation for making this, our final tour, the greatest. God bless you all and we wish each of you the very best in all you do. America's Corps!

*Lt. Gen. Edward Soriano
Commander*